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ABSTRACT

With fewer recent high school graduates available to attend college, colleges need to increase their efforts to attract adults. If colleges want to attract more adult students, they must develop a comprehensive marketing plan. The marketing process entails a thorough marketing study that includes a detailed institutional analysis, an analysis of competing colleges, and an analysis of the potential adult students. The results of this marketing analysis may suggest changes that should be made to serve the needs of the potential adult students. Because adults must be aware of the college and its programs in order to participate, colleges must also consider the various promotional methods that may be used to inform potential adult students of the attributes of the college that may be appealing to adults and of the programs available at the institution. The various forms of mass media and specialized media will require an advertising budget as a part of the marketing plan. However, other forms of promotion may be used at little or no cost to the institution, including publicity provided by the public relations department, community involvement of faculty and administrators, personal selling by faculty and staff, and free samples of instruction to prospective students. (KC)

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Marketing Higher Education to Adults

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Professor Phil Dreyer

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Introduction: Why should colleges market to adults?

Until recently colleges have generally depended on the natural flow of students from high school into college for the vast majority of their college populations. Students came to them. They usually didn't have to go out to find the students, although many prestigious colleges and expensive private colleges have been actively recruiting top high school graduates for many years. But today, colleges which concentrate their recruiting efforts on high school students will be effective for less than 40 percent of the college student population, and may find their enrollment dropping due to the decline in the number of high school students (Chronicle, 1988, p.3).

Times have changed, and the college student population has changed. Between 1979 and 1984 the number of 18-year-olds dropped 14 percent, but the total enrollment in higher education increased by 7 percent (O'Keefe, 1985). The college student population has evolved to include greater numbers of adult college students. In fact, according to 1987 Census Bureau statistics, the adult student population is now in the majority on college campuses nationwide. Students of age 25 and over comprise 62.8 percent of the national college student population (Chronicle, 1988, p.3). In addition, those who study the labor market believe that an improvement in the job market for college graduates has contributed to the growth in enrollment (Harrington, 1987).

Because today's college students are generally older, their characteristics are somewhat different from those of the younger, traditional age college students. Most of the adults are part-time students: only 56.9 percent of all college students nationwide attend college full-time (Chronicle, 1988, p.3). In the Los Angeles area, only 38.7 percent are full-time students ("Total and Full-Time," 1985). Because many of the adults are working, they tend to attend colleges which are close to home or work (Cross, 1983). Many adults take courses for specific job-related reasons, such as career advancement or career change ("Participation in," 1986). And many adults who are enrolled in college classes have already completed a college degree, or have completed some previous college work (Cross, 1983). These characteristics present a very different picture of today's "typical" college student from the stereotype of the 18-year-old first-time college student who attends college full-time and does not work.

Thesis: <u>Colleges must first become aware of the changes in the age and the characteristics of the college student population, and then address these changes through a strong marketing effort aimed at the adult students.</u> This is not to say that colleges should stop recruiting high school students. But rather, colleges must add to their recruitment efforts through an organized, comprehensive marketing plan which is aimed at the potential adult students. Through a comprehensive, ongoing marketing program everybody wins: adults become aware of college programs which meet their needs; and colleges increase enrollment and revenue.

What is Marketing?

Many of those involved in higher education have an aversion to the word "marketing" (Brooker & Noble, 1985). In a study of 350 private colleges, almost 90 percent of the respondents equated marketing with promotion (Grabowski, 1981). Those who don't know what the marketing process entails assume that marketing is something which is done to sell cars or fast food, but certainly not higher education! Nothing could be further from the truth.

Marketing is a philosophy in which the consumer reigns supreme. According to Kotler (1980), "...the key to achieving organizational goals consists of the organization's determining the needs and wants of target markets and adapting itself to delivering the desired satisfactions more effectively and efficiently than its competitors" (p.22). This definition of marketing has been adapted for higher education by Fischer: "A combination of activities required to direct the flow of educational programs and services from the higher education institution to the consumer in a form, place, time, and at a price that is best able to satisfy the consumers' needs" (1987). In business and in higher education the entire marketing process must be used to achieve these goals.

The marketing process consists of four components, referred to by Kotler as the "Four P's of Marketing": Product, Price, Promotion, and Place (p.90). These four components may be adapted for the marketing of any product. A product is analyzed to examine its quality, features, options, style, brand names, packaging, services, and other characteristics. The major question which must be addressed in examining a product is, "Does the product meet the needs of the consumer?" The price of the product must be competitive with other similar products in the marketplace, but must also provide the company with a good return on the investment over the long term. Attributes of the price which might be studied include the list price, any possible discounts, and credit terms. Promotion is the component which is most often mistaken for the total marketing process rather than just one quarter of the marketing process. Promotion includes any efforts to make the consumer aware of the product, including the following strategies: advertising, personal selling, publicity, and any other communication tools which present the product favorably to consumers. Place includes distribution methods or retail locations: the location of the product for the consumer. Products must be made available at times and places most convenient to the consumer.

The "Four P's" may be easily adapted to the marketing of colleges. The product could be either the college, or a program, or even a specific class. The price of tuition must be considered in relation to other comparable colleges and programs in the region, and might even be considered on a national basis if the college is competitive nationally. Scholarships, fellowships, work-study programs, student loans, and other methods of tuition assistance must be considered as a part of the price. Promotion of the college includes any methods of informing potential students of the

college and its programs. Finally, place includes the location of the campus, the location of off-campus classes, the scheduling of classes, and any other methods for the distribution of classes, including home-study programs, computer modems, telecourses, satellite teleconferencing, and other means by which a student might participate in college classes. All of these components must be carefully analyzed in constructing a marketing plan.

How can colleges apply marketing strategies to market to adults?

The first step in a college marketing program is a thorough analysis of the college or program, the competing colleges, and the potential adult students. Next, decisions must be made about whether any changes are necessary to the college or program to be more competitive or to better meet the needs of the potential students. Finally, promotional strategies must be chosen to communicate the messages about the institution and the programs to potential adult students.

The marketing program may be carried out by a hired marketing firm, the college "Enrollment Manager," or a group of faculty and staff within the college. Seventy-five faculty volunteers at Grand Rapids Junior College chose to form nine subcommittees to tackle the necessary research. This process was challenging, but it was also cost-effective, and was an effective way for faculty to be involved in the marketing process (Mulder-Edmonson, 1981).

Market Analysis. A detailed analysis of the product, the competition, and the potential consumers of the product allow the college to correctly "position" the product. Ries and Trout (1981) explain, ". . . positioning is not what you do to the product. Positioning is what you do to the mind of the prospect. That is, you position the product in the mind of the prospect" (p.3).

It is critically important to understand the market "position" currently held by the product in the minds of potential consumers in order to determine if changes must be made to the product, the price, the promotion, or the place in order to secure a worthwhile "position" in the market. All four components must work together in a complimentary way so that the product is perceived correctly by the potential consumers, and so that the "position" of this product is unique and different from the "positions" of competing products.

1. Analysis of the Product. First, what is the product to be analyzed? As mentioned earlier, individual marketing plans may be developed for the institution, for its programs, and for specific courses. Second, what is unique about the college, program, or course? Does your college meet a unique need for adult students? Third, to what extent is price a factor for potential adult students? Fourth, to what extent are your location and class scheduling factors for potential adult students? Fifth, and finally, how is your college or program perceived by potential adult students? This is what Ries and Trout (1981) refer to as the "position". Is the perception of your college or program accurate? Do the potential adult students really know the strengths (and

weaknesses) of your institution and programs? What is the current position of your college or program in the marketplace?

The most important question is this: Should anything about the program or institution be changed? Cyril Houle (1976) advocates redesigning programs of higher education for specific purposes to meet the needs of adult students. This might include designing a new institutional format, such as a special baccalaureate degree sequence, or designing new activities in established formats, such as the development of new topics within a program. Triton College in Illinois studied the needs of adult learners to completely overhaul the organization of its curriculum. Ten general categories of courses were developed in response to the adult needs. Many existing classes were slotted into the new categories, and new courses were also developed for adults (Calhoun, 1987). Some colleges offer more flexible schedules for adults through modular programs with shorter, more intensive classes (Eldred & Marienau, 1979). It is important to provide for the needs of the adult students without being tied to the traditional methods of operation.

2. Analysis of the Competition. The competition for adult students has been multiplying in recent years. Not only are colleges competing with each other, but they are also competing with proprietary schools, public agencies, labor unions, private corporations, and trade associations which provide classes to adults (Lenz, 1980). By analyzing the competition in the marketplace, colleges can determine the similarities and differences between comparable colleges and other institutions which might be alternative choices for potential adult students. For younger students who may move across the country to attend the "right" college, this competition could be on a national level. But for adult students who tend to attend college close to home, the majority of competition is within the region.

First, which other colleges and institutions are competing for your adult students? The answer to this question might be different from one program to another. For instance, in an area which has many colleges, only one or two colleges may offer a highly specialized program such as Horticulture, but probably all of the colleges offer a program in English. Therefore, the analysis of the competition will vary greatly by program.

Second, how are the other colleges, and the programs of the other colleges, perceived by your potential adult students? It is possible that the reputation or image of a college is not accurate, because it takes many years to build a good reputation, and many more years for the reputation to change once it has been established. In addition, the reputation of certain programs may also not be accurate. An example of this is Vassar College. Some colleges may have a mediocre program which has an excellent reputation based on the quality of the program as it was many years ago. Other colleges may have excellent programs which have not yet been recognized as such.

Finally, what does your college or program provide for adult students that the competition does not? After analyzing the competition it should be relatively easy to determine the strengths and weaknesses of your college or program in relation to the competition. It is possible that some unique feature of the institution, such as child care, flexible scheduling, or convenient off-campus class locations, could be considered important enough by adults to choose your institution over another. Programs may also offer unique features, such as renowned faculty, teaching styles which respect the adult learner, a unique emphasis in the discipline, or internship and research opportunities in the field. But, in order to discover these "unique" features, the competition must be carefully analyzed. An institution or program may incorrectly assume that "every college has this" or "every program does it this way." Sometimes the unique positive features are not apparent until after analyzing the competition.

3. Analysis of the Consumer: the Potential Adult Students. Three questions may be addressed when analyzing the potential adult students: who are they demographically and psychographically; what do they need; and what is their perception of your college?

a. Who are the adult students? There may be some regional differences in the demographic profile of the potential pool of adult students. In affluent areas in which the population is fairly well educated, there may be a greater interest in graduate and professional programs among adults. In depressed areas of high unemployment, adults may have more interest in quickly obtaining necessary vocational skills at a community college.

In the Greater Los Angeles area, there are some striking differences between adults who attend college and the general population of adults. Adults who attend college are 13 percent more likely to have household incomes of $50,000 or more. They are 41 percent more likely to be employed in professional or managerial occupations. And adult college students in Los Angeles are 55 percent more likely to have a college degree ("Study of Media," 1984-85).

Despite regional differences, some generalizations may be made about the demographic characteristics of adult college students nationwide. Most adult students are in their twenties and thirties, and few are older than mid-fifties (Solomon & Gordon, 1981, p.13). More women are enrolling in college courses, and they tend to be somewhat older than the men (p.14). Minority adults enroll in courses much less often than whites (Desruisseaux, 1984). Adult students are less likely than traditional age students to have parents who attended college (Cross, 1983). However, adults who have completed a college degree or have previously completed college coursework are much more likely to participate in higher education than the population at large (Desruisseaux, 1984).

The psychographic characteristics of potential adult students may also be analyzed. These

include psychological factors which are somewhat more difficult to measure than the demographic factors: values, lifestyles, and motivations.

SRI International has developed a typology for analyzing these factors, called "VALS": Values and Lifestyles. The three basic types in the VALS typology are "Need-Driven", "Outer-Directed", and "Inner-Directed." Those in the Need-Driven group are the disadvantaged who are concerned with satisfying their basic needs. This group tends to be involved in higher education less than the other groups. The Outer-Directed group is concerned with how they are perceived by others. One of the three subgroups of the Outer-Directed group, called "Achievers," tend to be involved in higher education to a greater extent than the other Outer-Directed subgroups. The "Achievers" are those who are leaders in business and the professions. Finally, the Inner-Directed group is the group most likely to be involved in higher education. These are people who are driven by their own inner desires and values rather than those dictated by others. The Inner-Directed group includes three subgroups: the "Societally Conscious," who have a strong sense of societal responsibility; the "Experientials," who want direct experience and involvement; and the highly individualistic trend-setters called the "I-AM-ME" group (Voorhees, 1987). Those who are most likely to participate in higher education, according to the VALS typology, are those in the "Societally Conscious," the "Achievers," the "Experientials," and the "I-AM-ME" lifestyle groups ("Study of Media," 1984-85).

Orange Coast College, in Costa Mesa, California, used the VALS typology to analyze its current student population in order to design a marketing and plan a promotional campaign which would attract potential students of the same VALS groups. Their research revealed the following proportions of the three major VALS groups: the Need Driven group comprises 11 percent of the U.S. population, but only 4 percent of the Orange Coast College population; the Outer-Directed group make up 68 percent of the U.S. population and 35 percent of the Orange Coast College population; and the Inner-Directed group represents 29 percent of the U.S. population, but a whopping 61 percent of the Orange Coast College population. As a result of this analysis, Orange Coast College has been able to more effectively target different promotional material for each group of potential students according to their values and lifestyles (Bennett, 1988).

A motivational typology was developed by Moorstain and Smart (1977) to better understand the reasons adults pursue higher education. This motivational typology was developed by using the six factors of the Boshier Educational Participation Scale: Social Relationships, External Expectations, Social Welfare, Professional Advancement, Escape/Stimulation, and Cognitive Interest. The largest group in Moorstain and Smart's study of adult students at a public four-year institution was the "Non-directed" group, which made up 52 percent of the respondents: those for

whom the six factors were roughly equal in importance as reasons for pursuing higher education. Those who attended college for career reasons made up 25 percent of the respondents. Adults who attended college because of a life change comprised 9 percent of the sample. Social motivations were the major factor for 9 percent of the sample. Finally, those who returned to college to seek stimulation made up the smallest group: 5 percent of the sample. These motivational groups may vary from one college to another. Although difficult to measure, using this type of motivational assessment is an excellent way to become better acquainted with the reasons adults return to college. As with the VALS groups, marketing strategies may be specifically designed for each motivational type.

The motivations of adult students were studied by the American College Testing Program from 1981 to 1986. Adults were highly motivated by practical reasons, such as obtaining a higher degree, meeting a job requirement, and improving their income. But two-thirds of the respondents indicated that personal happiness and general self-improvement were major reasons for returning to college (Graham, 1988).

In a study of the reasons graduate students return to college, Maloney ("Why Students Pursue," 1987) found the following five major reasons cited by graduate students for pursuing further study: want to learn more about specialty (73 percent); wanted advanced degree for personal satisfaction (62 percent); thought job prospects would be better (48 percent); needed advanced degree for professional reasons (46 percent); and field of interest requires advanced degree to be a professional in the field (45 percent) (1987). This study shows that the career motivations are also quite strong among graduate students, although personal satisfaction also rated highly as a reason for continuing their education.

b. What do adult students need? Because a high percentage of adults return to college for career reasons and personal enrichment, the educational needs of many adults may be met by providing such courses. The learning needs of adults may be met through the use of adult learning methods (Knowles, 1984; and Cross, 1983). Services needed by adults may include convenient registration procedures, scheduling of classes for working adults, tuition assistance, child care, and career counseling. The facilities needed by adults may include a convenient location, adequate parking, and a comfortable learning environment (Mason, 1986). Younger students could probably also benefit from the changes made by institutions to meet the needs of the adults.

Why do adults choose one college over another? Generally, they choose the college which meets their most pressing needs. Iovacchini, Hall, and Hengstler (1985) studied the reasons adults choose to attend one public four-year college. They found the following top six reasons for choosing that particular college, in this order: location of the university, availability of

programs, cost of enrollment, career opportunities, quality of faculty, and academic reputation.

The study of adult college students conducted by the American College Testing Program revealed some predictable preferences and some surprises. Two-thirds of the adults preferred to attend college part-time, over half preferred evening classes, and one third preferred classes that met once per week. However, almost thirty percent indicated a preference for morning classes, and almost forty percent preferred classes which met twice per week. Contrary to the assumptions made about providing classes at "convenient" times for adults, only three percent indicated a preference for weekend classes (Graham, 1988).

What are the potential barriers to attending college for adult students? Cross (1983) lists three types of barriers to college attendence: situational barriers, such as cost, lack of time, and home and job responsibilities; institutional barriers, including length of time to finish a degree, inconvenient class scheduling, lack of information about the programs, and complicated enrollment procedures; and dispositional barriers created by the individual, including a lack of confidence in academic abilities, and a negative attitude toward school.

Sewall and Kocurek's study (1985) compared the adults enrolled in the University of Wisconsin, Stevens Point, with the adults in the community who were not enrolled. They found that the situational barriers of cost and job and home responsibilities, and the dispositional barrier of lack of incentive were major reasons for not attending college. In a survey of non-returning students by Lakeland Community College, the institutional barrier of incovenient class scheduling was a major factor in the decision not to return to college (Thompson, 1985).

The needs of adult students must be carefully studied to determine if the institution should make any changes which would better serve the adults. Many colleges may have already made the necessary changes to meet the needs of adult students. These advantages should be communicated clearly to the potential adult students in any promotional campaigns.

c. What is the perception of the college or program by adults? First, are potential adult students even aware of the college or program? It is likely that many colleges are currently meeting the needs of adults, but they have not informed the potential adult students. This problem will be addressed in the discussion of promotional strategies.

Second, what is the image, or "position", of the college or program in the minds of the potential adult students? It is possible, for example, that a college may be perceived as being "too expensive," even though tuition assistance is available. Some community colleges may have the reputation of having low academic standards, when in reality the academic standards may be higher than those of the lower division classes of a local four-year college. Although Vassar has been coeducational for over twenty years, it continues to have the image of "parasols and white gloves

and as a school that caters to a female social elite" (Moll, 1985, p.165). Only a thorough analysis of the perceptions of current adult students and potential adult students will reveal the current image and any image problems which may exist.

Colleges tend to promote institutional quality by listing quantitative factors, such as the number of library books, faculty-student ratios, and the expenditure per student. However, prospective students are more interested in the manifestations of the quality of the college. A study of applicants accepted at Colgate University in Fall, 1984 revealed the following top factors which determined the quality of the academic reputation of the institution in the minds of the new students: college faculty, the quality of the student body, and reputation of the alumni (Kealy & Rockel, 1987). In addition, the degree of involvement with peers and faculty which is available to students and the purposes of the institution and the program should be clearly indicated to prospective students. These factors are better indicators of quality, in the minds of prospective students, than the quantitative factors (Kuh, Coomes & Lindquist, 1984).

Institutional Self-Study and Strategic Planning.

"Institutional Self-Study" is the term which is more commonly used within higher education for the process of market analysis which has been described (Bruker & Taliana, 1985). Colleges which have an ongoing, systematic program of institutional research may use this information for the purpose of marketing the institution and its programs. A thorough institutional self-study includes information on the characteristics of the institution and its programs, the colleges which are competing for the same students, and the student population.

Many colleges are also currently involved in strategic planning activities to assess the current state of the institution and its programs in order to plan for the future direction of the institution (McMillen, 1988). A strategic plan requires a "mission statement" which states the purpose of the institution, just as a marketing plan requires a "position." The marketing plan should be an integral part of the strategic plan because both involve an extensive institutional self-study, both may involve a change in the image of the institution, and both determine the future direction of the college (Williford, 1987).

Promotional Strategies to Reach Adults.

The one component which may be missing from a strategic plan is a detailed, well-organized, ongoing promotional plan for both the institution and the individual programs. Management professor Robert Grossman (1987) says, "No matter how good your programs and facilities may be, if you don't let the world know about them, you have limited your chances for success. . . . if you're not prepared to market, you cannot expect to remain competitive."

Various studies of adult education have suggested that the major need is not more educational

opportunities for adults, but rather a better system of linking potential learners to already existing options (Cross & McCartan, 1984). Engel, Warshaw, and Kinnear (1983) advocate a promotional strategy which is ". . . a controlled integrated program of communication methods and materials designed to present a company and its products to prospective customers; to communicate need-satisfying attributes of products to facilitate sales and thus contribute to long-run profit performance" (p.6). Adults must be aware of the college and its programs before they can participate. A promotional plan is used to bring greater awareness of the college and programs to potential adult students, to create a favorable image of the college and programs, and, if necessary, to change the image or "position" of the college in the minds of potential adult students.

There are many methods of promotion which may be used by a college to accomplish these goals, including paid advertising, free publicity, community involvement, personal selling, and "free" samples for potential students.

Paid Advertising includes the mass media: television, radio, newspapers, magazines, and billboards. In addition, paid advertising includes the more specialized media: direct mail, newsletters of relevant organizations, and promotional items. A budget should be developed in advance to determine the amount of money which should be spent on advertising. The advertising budget should be considered as an investment for increasing enrollment. Falk (1986) suggests that colleges should plan to spend the amount necessary to attract and enroll the desired number of students. Advertising costs will be recovered from the increased revenue which is gained from increased enrollment.

1. Mass Media. Each of the mass media has certain advantages and disadvantages for college advertising. Colleges should use the information gathered in the marketing analysis to consider the costs and benefits of each of the mass media before deciding to use one or several of the mass media.

Newspapers are the most popular of the mass media for advertising ("Broadcasting: 1987," 1987). In particular, newspapers are the most popular method used for local advertising ("TvB Basics," 1987). Advertisers tend to use newspaper advertising if they have detailed messages which may be clipped and saved by potential consumers. Another advantage of newspaper advertising is that it may be targeted to particular audiences by section: for example, MBA programs are commonly advertised in the Business Section of a newspaper. Moreover, newspaper coverage includes 87 percent of households, and newspapers are read by 79 percent of college graduates (Engel, Warshaw & Kinnear, 1983, p.225). In a survey of adult students at Pitt Community College, the adults rated newspaper advertising as the most effective form of promotion used by the college (North Carolina, 1985).

However, the amount of time spent with newspapers is relatively low when compared with the broadcast media ("How Effective," 1987). The cost to reach one thousand people is very high in comparison to the other mass media ("The Radio Marketing," 1987). For colleges, newspapers may be a good buy if they are highly targeted to the audience of potential students. The high cost per thousand may be offset by reaching a greater percentage of potential students.

As with newspapers, magazine advertising may be used for more detailed information. Through the use of bold graphics and high-quality photographs, magazine advertisements are generally more esthetically appealing than newspaper ads. In addition, magazines are usually kept longer than newspapers, and may be passed around.

But magazines are the least popular of the mass media with both advertisers and consumers. Consumers spend less time with magazines than with any of the other mass media ("The Radio Marketing," 1987). The cost to reach one thousand people between the ages of eighteen and thirty-four ranges from approximately eleven dollars for People magazine to 38 dollars for U.S. News & World Report (Engel, Warshaw & Kinnear, 1983, p. 291). Colleges which buy magazine advertising might well be paying high advertising costs in general circulation magazines to reach many who are not potential students. For this reason, magazine advertising is probably not a cost effective mass medium for colleges.

Television is the most popular of the mass media for national advertising ("TvB Basics," 1987). Ninety-eight percent of the households in the United States have television sets ("Broadcasting: 1987," 1987). The average TV household views television seven hours and ten minutes per day, and the average adult spends over four hours watching television each day ("Broadcasting: 1987"). Consumers learn about products more often from television than from any other mass medium ("America's Watching," 1987). The combination of sight, sound, and action allows for products to be demonstrated in a way that none of the other media can match.

However, the costs of advertising on television are very high. The cost for a 30-second local television commercial ranges from $15,000 per spot in a major market to $10 per spot in very small towns ("Broadcasting/Cablecasting Yearbook," 1987, p. A2). The cost of producing a television commercial is continuing to rise, and the cost to reach one thousand people via television is high: approximately eight dollars in prime time (Heighton & Cunningham, 1983, p.266). It is important to note that as consumers' incomes increase, their television viewing tends to decrease ("The Radio Marketing," 1987). Those with a college education spend considerably less time watching television than the general public ("TvB Basics,"1987). The costs of television advertising may be beyond the advertising budget of most colleges. In addition, college advertising on television is likely to reach a great number of people who are not potential adult students.

Despite the high cost of television, several colleges have used television to successfully increase enrollment. Northeastern University used a five-week television campaign in August and September to attract adult students to their part-time degree program. This advertising campaign resulted in 7,000 new part-time adult students. Briar Cliff College in Sioux City, Iowa, had two problems: desire to increase enrollment, and desire to change the image of the college. In 1974 Briar Cliff had been converted from an all-women's college to a co-ed college. Through an ongoing television campaign with the theme, "Picture life at a college where the focus is on you," Briar Cliff College increased enrollment from 749 in 1974 to 1342 in 1981 ("Local Recruitment," 1987).

Cable television advertising may provide colleges with a more cost-efficient alternative to over-the-air television advertising. The production costs for a commercial are the same, but the advertising rates for a 30-second commercial are considerably less than traditional television: only $2 to $250 per spot ("Broadcasting/Cablecasting Yearbook,"1987, p.D3). Local cable outlets sell local commercial advertising time slots on popular national cable networks, such as CNN, the all-news network, ESPN, the sports network, Arts and Entertainment, and others. Advertising may be targeted to a specific audience by selecting a particular type of cable channel. Cable television systems currently reach over 47 percent of the nation's households ("Broadcasting/Cablecasting Yearbook," p. D3). However, the effectiveness of cable advertising depends on the penetration of cable in a particular market area. Unfortunately, unlike traditional television, relatively little research is available about the size and characteristics of the audiences for the various cable networks.

Radio is the most popular of the mass media among consumers. Of the total amount of time spent each day with all forms of mass media, adults spend 60 percent of their media time with radio ("How Effective," 1987). Ninety-nine percent of all homes in the United States have a radio, and 95 percent of all cars have radios ("Broadcasting: 1987," 1987). Radio reaches 95 percent of the national population over the age of 12 every week, and car radios reach 75 percent of all adults each week ("Broadcasting: 1987"). The costs of producing a radio commercial are generally included in the price of the advertising time in local radio stations. The cost of a 60-second radio commercial ranges from $1,000 per spot in a large market to less than a dollar in small town radio stations. The cost of reaching one thousand people is less on radio than on any of the other mass media: approximately three dollars (Engel, Warshaw & Kinnear, 1983, p.267). As with cable, radio advertising may be carefully targeted to a specific audience according to the radio format. Every radio format, such as talk radio, classical music, Top 40, or easy listening, is carefully targeted to a specific demographic and psychographic group. Each radio station has

specific demographic information available about the composition of its audience. Those who are responsible for buying advertising time for the college must be careful to avoid simply choosing their favorite radio station, or choosing a radio station that they assume will appeal to a group of potential adult students. Another trap to avoid is to simply choose the radio station which has the highest ratings or the lowest cost per thousand. Colleges which choose to buy advertising time on radio must be careful to select the stations which appeal to those who are the most likely to be potential adult students.

In a study of the methods of recruitment used by the Arizona community colleges, findings indicated that radio was the most used of the mass media. Ninety-three percent of the colleges use radio, 80 percent use newspapers, 47 percent use television, and 33 percent use magazines. Radio is the favorite of the Arizona community colleges because of its immediacy and low cost (Romero, 1987).

Billboards are another form of mass media which may be considered. Large, colorful billboards with striking images may be strategically placed so that they are noticed by drivers on their way to and from work every day. If other media are being used, billboards provide a good reminder to potential customers. Billboards are good for messages which are very simple and brief. The University of Utah has been successfully using strategically placed billboards each semester to announce upcoming registration dates, and Gloucester County College uses billboards to promote its summer program (Falk, 1986).

But other than the location, billboards are non-selective. Many people may be reached who are not potential college students. In addition, recall of billboards is generally low ("The Radio Marketing," 1987), particularly if they are not used in conjunction with other mass media.

Most advertising campaigns involve the use of several different mass media which work together to reinforce the message. Potential customers are more likely to remember the message if they see it on television, hear it on the radio, and read it in the newspaper. All of the advertising becomes more effective with a good media mix. Southern College in Orlando, Florida had been advertising in the local newspaper without much success. But when they also advertised on television, the inquiries jumped from 200 per month to 750 per month ("Local Recruitment," 1987).

2. Specialized media. It is generally much more expensive to reach one thousand people through the use of specialized media rather than the mass media. However, the overwhelming advantage to the specialized media is the likelyhood of reaching a much higher percentage of the target group: the potential adult college student. For this reason, colleges may find that it is considerably more cost efficient to use specialized media rather than mass media. This is

particularly true for highly specialized college programs.

Direct mail is the third most popular advertising medium behind newspapers and television (Engel, Warshaw & Kinnear, 1983, p.261). Direct mail strategies include personal letters, booklets, brochures, catalogs, fliers, and postcards. Although direct mail has a poor reputation as "junk mail" among consumers, a U.S. Postal Service survey revealed that 63 percent of all pieces of direct mail are opened and read, and 63 percent of the population have purchased a product as a result of direct mail (p.262). Although the cost to reach one thousand people is very high, those who are reached through very specialized mailing lists are much more likely to be potential customers. Colleges may wish to consider using mailing lists of specialized business organizations to reach adults who may be interested in highly specialized vocational or professional programs.

Newsletters of professional organizations and trade publications may also be used to reach a very specialized target group. The principle is the same as direct mail, but it may be easier to place an advertisement in these publications than to send many individual pieces of mail. For instance, the newsletter of a teachers' organization might be used for advertising a graduate program in education. If the college wants to attract students from other parts of the country, the publications of large national organizations may be considered. But in most cases, because adults tend to attend college close to home, the newsletters of local chapters of larger organizations would probably be more cost-efficient than national publications.

Finally, tangible promotional items are often used as reminders to potential clients. (Bader, 1986). Such items as memo pads, ballpoint pens, key rings, calenders, and other useful items may be printed with the college name, address, and phone number, and marketing message or slogan.

Free Publicity. Most colleges have a public relations department which generates positive information about the college through press releases which are sent to the local mass media outlets. This information might include such items as special awards received by the faculty, new academic programs, special concerts or lectures, and even routine information about registration and class offerings. John Scharf (1987) advocates a "tipsheet": a one page list of potential story ideas, sent to every newspaper, magazine, radio station and television station in the region on a regular basis. The "tipsheet" may include items of current interest to the region and comments from the faculty who have expertise in the topic. The public relations department must have good contacts at the local newspapers and in the news departments of radio and television stations in order to get the stories into the mass media. These stories provided by the public relations department create a good image for the college, and keep the college in the public eye in a positive way.

Stories may also be provided by faculty members who enjoy writing feature stories about their students or their program. Every faculty member has had experiences which would make excellent feature stories for a local newspaper or a regional magazine: success stories about students who have done particularly well after graduating from the college, potential dropouts who were able to become successful as a result of attending college, new teaching methods, humorous class experiences, scholarships which have helped students achieve their goals, and many others (Wilkerson, 1987). Such feature stories appeal to the general public, and bring greater awareness of the college to the public.

In addition to press releases about the college, shorter announcements about upcoming college events, such as special concerts, plays, art exhibitions, lectures, or registration for classes, may be sent to radio and television stations. Public Service Announcements (PSA's) are broadcast on radio and television stations for non-profit organizations free of charge. Radio and television stations are no longer required by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to air PSA's, but most have continued the practice as a community service (Gaffner, 1981). Colleges may take advantage of this by sending PSA copy to radio and television stations. Generally, the copy should be typed, double-spaced, written in a conversational style, and should be no longer than ten seconds in length when read aloud (Hilliard, 1984). Some television stations prefer for organizations to enclose a graphic slide which may be used on the screen as the PSA is being read. Most radio and television stations require that PSA's be received by station at least three to four weeks in advance of the event to be publicized. This will allow the PSA to be aired several times over the period of time leading up to the event. As with radio advertising, colleges may target PSA's to specific radio stations in which the listeners are likely to be interested in the college events or in enrolling in upcoming classes.

Community and Professional Involvement. Many colleges feel that prospective students find them through "word of mouth." This may be true, but how did the "word of mouth" begin? Colleges may stimulate "word of mouth" through community involvement. Faculty members may be encouraged to speak to local community and professional groups. The College President and other administrators may also be active in the community. Rather than living in a cloistered environment, colleges should make the effort to reach out to the local community. This brings a greater awareness of the college and its activities to the local community, and may stimulate the word of mouth which may ultimately result in a greater number of adult students.

The professional activities of faculty members are also helpful in bringing greater visibility to the college and to specific programs. Many faculty members retain their industry and professional connections. Prospective students often ask those who are working in a profession for

advice on good college programs for that profession. Professionals are likely to promote the programs that are familiar to them through their faculty contacts. Faculty in research universities commonly use their expertise to consult with local businesses in related fields. The involvement of faculty members in profesional organizations can bring recognition to the college on a national level as well as a regional level. Nearly 80 percent of the graduate departments surveyed indicated that faculty met prospective students at professional conferences as a method of recruitment (Maleny, "Efforts to Recruit,"1987). Of course, faculty research and publications bring a certain prestige to the institution within the discipline. But unless the research and professional activities of the faculty are made public through the use of press releases and advertisements, these efforts may not have an impact on prospective adult students.

Some colleges send their advanced students into the community to use their new skills in a productive way. Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles gives business students the opportunity to help small businesses through an internship program. Students work with the small business to offer suggestions which may help the business. The local businesses appreciate the help offered by the students, students gain the opportunity to use what they have learned in their classes, the Business department becomes known as a quality program, and Loyola Marymount is known for being involved in the community (Applegate, 1988).

Personal Selling. It has been estimated that businesses spend twice as much on personal selling as they do on advertising (Engel, Warshaw & Kinnear, 1983, p.407). The sales force is the lifeblood of the business which brings in the revenue. Salespeople help the customer to make a decision to buy the product by providing sufficient information about the product to allow the consumer to make an informed decision. According to Engel, Warshaw, and Kinnear, the tasks of personal selling include the following: meeting prospective customers, discovering customer needs and attitudes, recommending a product to fill the needs of the customer, developing a sales presentation aimed at informing the customer of the attributes of the product, persuading the customer to buy the recommended product, closing the sale, and following up to ensure customer satisfaction (p.414). Salespeople act as consultants to assist customers to find the product which meets their needs. An attitude of helpfulness differentiates the good salespeople from the stereotypical high-pressure salesperson. It is a matter of concern to the good salesperson that the customer makes the purchase which fits his or her needs. The customer is made to feel important by the good salesperson, because the customer is important!

Colleges may not realize it, but they commonly use personal selling as a tactic to attract new students. Most people think of the high-pressure car salesmen or shoe salesmen when they think of personal selling. But every faculty member and every staff member of a college is, in effect, a

salesperson for the college. When a prospective student visits a college, or phones a college for information, their impression of the college will be determined by their first communication with college faculty or staff. Prospective adult students who are treated with courtesy are likely to gain a favorable impression of the college. When a prospective student visits a college campus, if possible, a faculty member should take the time to talk to the prospective student to determine his or her needs and learning objectives. Prospective students should be given any available printed materials or brochures about the program, information about college registration, and the dates for the start of the next semester. If appropriate, prospective students could also be given a tour of the campus or the department facilities.

After the initial phone call or campus visit, a follow-up letter should be sent to the prospective student as a reminder of the visit or phone conversation. In a study of prospective students of Potsdam College, findings indicated that prospective students were most enthusiastic about the college as they were making initial inquiries, and again when they finally enrolled in the college. But during the in-between time, prospective students seemed to have a less positive feeling toward Potsdam. This suggested that a loss of interest or committment seemed to follow the initial inquiry. However, it is very possible that enthusiasm may be regenerated through a follow-up letter (Marshall & Delman, 1984). A follow-up letter lets the prospective student know that he or she is important to the college (de los Santos, 1984).

Adults who are given plenty of time by faculty and staff and are treated with respect as a serious prospective student may choose to attend one college over another, despite other factors such as higher tuition or a longer commute. This attitude of helpfulness tells prospective students, "You are important. You won't be just a number lost in the crowd here. We care about you as an individual. Your education is important to us." A helpful attitude is important for all prospective students, but it is particularly important for those adults who are somewhat apprehensive about returning to college.

It is important to remember that in the philosophy of marketing the consumer reigns supreme. In developing a marketing plan, this attitude of helpfulness toward students and prospective students may need to be reinforced in colleges which do not have this attitude as a part of the institutional culture. In some institutions faculty and staff may need to be reminded that their helpfulness and courtesy toward <u>both</u> current and prospective adult students may have a tremendous positive impact on the enrollment of the institution (Johnson, 1987).

<u>"Free" Samples for Prospective Students</u>. New products are commonly introduced to consumers by the offer of a free sample. This is particularly effective if the market is very competitive, the attributes of a product are difficult to describe, and the quality of the product is a

critical factor for the prospective customer (Engel, Warshaw, and Kinnear, 1983).

Colleges have been offering "free samples" to prospective students for many years, but these efforts have been aimed mainly at high school students in the form of a "College Visitation Day." This type of open house may also be offered to prospective adult students in the evening or on a weekend. However, in giving free samples to adult students, colleges must consider the schedules of adults, and the incentive for a busy adult to attend such an event at a college.

Adults may be interested in attending a free lecture on a topic which is relevant to their profession if they believe that they may learn something which may be used on the job the next day. Free evening or weekend lectures or workshops on a topic of interest to prospective adult students for a particular program may be advertised to attract the adults to the college. This "sample" may be just enough information to stimulate the interest of the adults to want to learn more about the topic. At the end of the lecture or workshop, further information about the program may be offered to those who are interested.

Short weekend courses for a small amount of tuition may have the same effect as a free lecture. Adults who enroll in a short course may learn just enough to decide that they want to learn more about the topic. Short courses can be used as effective promotional tools for programs.

Enrollment Management

The term "Enrollment Management" is a relatively recent one which is used to describe the functions of a part of the College Admissions Office. Some have said that the term "Enrollment Management" is synonomous with "Marketing" (Albright, 1986). Others, who do not understand the full marketing process, feel that enrollment management is better than marketing, because it was their erroneous assumption that the marketing efforts involved only advertising and did not involve product development (Ingersoll, 1988).

Colleges which have an Enrollment Management department may want to examine its activities very closely to be certain that it is actually performing the necessary marketing functions to attract adult students. Don Hossler, author of *Creating Efficient Enrollment Management Systems*, said, "A number of institutions would say they're adopting an enrollment management approach, but really what they're adopting is an admissions management approach" (Greene, 1987).

An effective Enrollment Manager will carry out all of the same functions which have been described as the marketing process (Ingersoll, 1988). Enrollment Management consultant, Frank Kemerer, asserts that enrollment management "involves many facets of the institution. An institution has to really engage in a period of very intensive soul-searching" (Green, 1987).

However, in many cases, the Enrollment Manager may not have the necessary marketing

background to carry out a comprehensive marketing plan. For this reason, the efforts of the Enrollment Management department may simply be the same old strategies which have traditionally been used to attract a dwindling supply of high school students (Chait, 1987). As stated earlier, these strategies should not be dropped, but rather, they should be enhanced by adding a comprehensive marketing program which is aimed at the potential adult students.

Conclusion: Implications for Colleges

If colleges want to attract more adult students, they must develop a comprehensive marketing plan by using the step-by-step process which has been outlined. The marketing process entails a thorough marketing study which includes a detailed institutional analysis, an analysis of competing colleges, and an analysis of the potential adult students. The results of this marketing analysis may suggest changes which should be made to better serve the needs of the potential adult students.

Because adults must be aware of the college and its programs in order to participate, colleges must also consider the various promotional methods which may be used to inform potential adult students of the attributes of the college which may be appealing to adults, and of the programs available at the institution. The various forms of mass media and specialized media will require an advertising budget as a part of the marketing plan. However, other forms of promotion may be used at little or no cost to the institution, including publicity provided by the Public Relations department, community involvement of faculty and administrators, personal selling by faculty and staff, and free samples of instruction to prospective students.

Through a detailed marketing plan which is carefully organized and implemented, the needs of adults will be better served, and the college will increase the enrollment of adults. Everybody wins!

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